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Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation
Somalia: Expanding Crisis in the Horn of Africa
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INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Chairman Royce and Chairman Smith for calling today's hearing. Somalia is an African nation that raises a series of concerns for those who are interested in the continent specifically, and those who are interested in security and counter-terrorism efforts globally. In 2001, President George W. Bush instructed his foreign policy staff that their primary goal would be to make the world "safer, freer, better." In subsequent years, this has continued to be the guiding principle of the Administration's Africa policy.

When considering the Africa policy of this Administration it is worth noting that this credo has two implications; the United States is contributing generously toward improved democratic governance, health and economic growth in Africa, and the United States is also actively engaged in denying safe haven to terrorists with the help of African partners. Africa finds itself involved in the Global War on Terror, and Somalia is a critical element of our broader efforts to fight global terrorism. The continued absence of a central government, functioning as such, has allowed the East African nation to serve as a safe haven for terrorists and a humanitarian nightmare for the local population. Given the nature of the chaos within Somalia's borders and its numerous neighbors, this negative charge has impacted the Horn of Africa more generally.

On June 15, I co-chaired with Norway the first meeting of the International Somalia Contact Group in New York. This group includes representatives of: the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the United States, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Tanzania, and others. The group has invited the Arab League and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to participate in future discussions.

The goal of the International Somalia Contact Group's ongoing discussions is to form a coalition that can engage the parties in Somalia and encourage stability and movement in a constructive and positive direction. The international community is united by shared concerns about the local and regional ripple effects of Somalia's internal dynamics.

The group is focused on supporting the Somali people who have suffered for the last decade, as well as how their situation has been used to benefit others. We remain deeply troubled by the foreign-born terrorists who have found safe haven in Somalia in recent years. Counter-terrorism is only one among several issues that American policy makers should consider in examining Somalia and the East African region.

ENGAGING THE HORN OF AFRICA

On Monday, I returned from East Africa. Secretary Rice requested that I visit the region and meet with stakeholders, in an effort to gather relevant information and properly advise the Secretary about the issues at hand. I visited with leaders from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti – Somalia's neighbors and members of IGAD. Collectively, all four stops contributed toward a fuller understanding of the Contact Group's recent communiqué and follow-on efforts to determine the best way forward in Somalia.

In each country, the message remained the same. The United States has certain goals with regard to Somalia. While counter-terrorism is an important issue, it is not the only issue. The United States is additionally focused on: governance and institution building, humanitarian assistance for the Somali people, and improving regional security and stability. These issues are, of course, interconnected and also provide support for our counter-terrorism efforts.

While visiting Kenya, I had the opportunity to meet with the leadership of the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs), including the Speaker of Parliament Shariff Hassan Sheikh Adan, President Abdullah Yusuf, and Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi. The core message of that meeting was the overwhelming support of the international community for the Transitional Federal Institutions and the Transitional Federal Charter, which serves as the guiding framework for the various components of the Transitional Federal Institutions. The participants plan to mobilize resources and support for the Transitional Federal Institutions, as well as the people of Somalia.

After I met with them, these three Somali officials traveled to Khartoum to meet with a delegation of the Union of Islamic Courts, which was subsequently renamed the Somali Supreme Islamic Courts Council (SSICC). That the three officials traveled together was encouraging; it signaled their seriousness of purpose and their interest in returning peace and stability to their nation. The situation in the region is incredibly dynamic. There is a great deal of movement and potential for change. While the outcomes from the meeting in Khartoum represented a positive first step, follow-on actions must demonstrate both sides' commitment to working together within the framework of the Transitional Federal Charter to support the reestablishment of effective governance in Somalia. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in Khartoum on July 15 and will provide a clear indication of both parties' willingness to engage in constructive dialogue.

The goals for United States policy are clear. American leaders must work within the existing framework to demonstrate support for the Transitional Federal Charter and Institutions, and work together, in order to affect peace, development, and hope for the people of Somalia. Through diplomatic action and by example, the United States can convey to the rest of the world that the Transitional Federal Institutions in Baidoa offers the only legitimate framework for governance in Somalia and encourage the inclusive dialogue needed to support further progress within that framework. The scope of this dialogue should include engagement with broader elements of Somali society, including civil society, the business community, and leaders of marginalized sub-clans, in an effort to form a more inclusive political process.

These are sizable, and possibly daunting, goals. The formation of the International Somalia Contact Group, as a means of greater policy coordination among members of the international community, is a positive step in and of itself. This Contact Group will capably support and encourage positive political developments in Somalia. The next meeting of the International Somalia Contact Group will be held in Sweden on July 7, in an effort to build upon successes from the first meeting and create sustained momentum.

CONCERNS ABOUT TERRORISM

In pursuing the United States' three key policy goals – namely, addressing terrorism, supporting the reestablishment of effective governance and political stability, and responding to the humanitarian needs of the Somali people – the Department of State remains cognizant of the challenges the United States government faces in Somalia.

Not only have international terrorists found a safe haven in the nation, but Somalia also constitutes a general security risk for the broader region. There has been an increase in arms trading; the ease with which weapons move in and out of Somalia is troubling. We are working with our partners in the International Somalia Contact Group to develop a common response to address these concerns. For example, members of the International Somalia Contact Group discussed mechanisms for strengthening the capacity of the TFG's security forces in a way that will promote the formation of an effective, inclusive security force. These issues will be discussed further at the next Contact Group meeting on July 7.

This reality compels American policymakers to consider a regional approach to engagement; no approach can succeed without accounting for Somalia's neighbors. Toward that end, the Department of State is continuing to work with East African countries to build their capacity to counter terrorism and criminality that originates in Somalia. This effort should promote increased stability and safety within the Horn of Africa through the development of specific follow on measures to the President's East Africa Counter-terrorism Initiative (EACTI), which was announced in 2003.

Of course, security challenges remain. Several violent terrorists have taken refuge in Somalia, including some of the individuals who perpetrated the 1998 bombings of two United States embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, as well as the 2002 attacks against an Israeli airliner and hotel in Mombasa, Kenya. These individuals – Abu Talha al Sudani, Fazul Abdullah Mohamed, and Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan – pose an immediate threat to both Somali and international interests in the Horn of Africa. American counter-terrorism concerns are directly related to the presence of these foreign terrorists and individuals willing to offer them safe haven within Somalia. We must therefore take strong measures to deny terrorists safe haven in Somalia – we must deny them the ability to plan and operate.

While the broad policy goals outlined above will remain constant, we are constantly reviewing and updating our approach to reflect the fluid dynamics inside Somalia.

The United States government remains committed to neutralizing the threat that al Qaeda poses to all Americans, Somalis, and citizens in neighboring Horn of Africa countries. Somalia cannot serve as a safe harbor for terrorists. The United States government will continue working with Somalis, regardless of clan, religious, or secular affiliation. Consistent with United States policy globally, there has been an effort to reach out and develop relationships with individuals who can provide useful data with regard to locating terrorists. The primary, guiding imperative for all of these interactions is combating terrorism.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In addition to the immediate concerns regarding terrorism, the situation in Somalia raises a host of challenges. Concerns remain about humanitarian and socio-economic conditions in Somalia, as well as governance structures, human rights, domestic security, and regional stability.

The international community is now galvanized and has begun working toward an acceptable solution, as demonstrated by the formation of the International Somalia Contact Group. This is not an exclusive grouping. Rather, the focus is on sharing information, coordinating our common policy objectives, and forging workable solutions. For that reason, the group was receptive when the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) reached out and indicated their intention to work positively toward a better future for Somalia. UIC representatives indicated that they do not intend to be a replacement government. Our understanding at the time was that the UIC had no plans to threaten the Transitional Federal Government. As a result, Contact Group participants agreed that there was an immediate need for dialogue between the UIC and Transitional Federal Government. The Contact Group additionally called on all parties to end fighting and the growth of militia movements. By coordinating common policy objectives and sharing information on political developments in Somalia, the International

Somalia Contact Group will become a vehicle to encourage positive developments, while offering support for the implementation of the Somalia Transitional Federal Charter and Transitional Federal Institutions.

THE WAY FORWARD

The Transitional Federal Charter and Transitional Federal Institutions offer Somalia a way forward, following the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference in Kenya from 2002-2004. The Charter and Institutions provide a framework for progress that the Somali people support. Both reflect consensus and thereby offer a legitimate and viable roadmap for rebuilding legitimate and effective governance in Somalia.

The existence of the Charter and Institutions does not obviate the need for inclusive political dialogue. Ideally, the dialogue in Khartoum between the UIC and TFG would be only the beginning; while it is a positive start, it should expand to include the broader elements of Somali society, including civil society leaders, business leaders, clan elders, and other key stakeholder groups. The UIC, which was recently renamed as the SSICC, should also stay put. Continuing to expand into Somalia would be an inflammatory mistake because such movement calls the group's intentions into question and sparks concerns among neighboring states. Given all of the current instability, the SSICC should stop any expansion, so as to signal the absence of aggressive plans.

Although the situation inside Somalia remains fluid, previous statements from the Union of Islamic Courts, including an open letter to the international community, which indicated that the group remained open and flexible, encourages us. We hope to receive similar statements from the recently formed SSICC, and we encourage the SSICC to continue the dialogue with the Transitional Federal Institutions in Khartoum.

The SSICC must also follow through with concerted action, including the eviction of foreign terrorist operatives from Somalia. Such affirmative steps would heighten security and supplement efforts to stabilize the region. The International Somalia Contact Group intends to encourage such developments in a way that facilitates the full implementation of the Transitional Federal Charter and Institutions.

In the weeks ahead, I expect to participate in further discussions both at the Department of State and with international partners. After my recent trip to the region, it is clear that instability in Somalia has worsened humanitarian conditions for the civilian population. Since the beginning of the year, over eleven thousand new Somali refugees have fled from these worsening conditions into Kenya.

The international community now stands at a crossroads. The outcome is dependent on our will, our ability to work cooperatively, and the quality of our

joint decisions. Thank you again, Chairman Smith and Chairman Royce, for convening this important hearing. It is important that United States government policymakers discuss the pressing issues at hand and find a workable plan for moving ahead in Somalia and in the Horn of Africa.